

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 EB-08 OMB-01 TRSE-00 AID-05
COME-00 PC-01 SIL-01 LAB-04 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 CU-04 /099 W
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R 171213Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1816

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ACCRA 0411

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1
TAGS: SHUM, PGOV, PINS, PINT, EGEN, GH
SUBJ: ATTORNEY GENERAL DISCUSSES POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC
CONDITIONS IN GHANA

SUMMARY: IN A WIDE-RANGING AND CANDID DISCUSSION
JANUARY 16, COMMISSIONER FOR JUSTICE AND ATTORNEY
GENERAL KORENTENG-ADDOW REVIEWED NUMEROUS ISSUES
WITH AMBASSADOR AND POLOFF - POLITICAL PRISONERS,
STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS, UNION GOVERNMENT, PEACE AND
SOLIDARITY COUNCIL, MARCH REFERENDUM AND ECONOMIC
SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

1. POLITICAL PRISONERS AND HUMAN RIGHTS: AMBASSADOR HAD ASKED
FOR MEETING WITH ATTORNEY GENERAL TO DISCUSS AMNESTY INTER-
NATIONAL INQUIRY INTO CASE OF ONE NII ASHONG, SAID TO HAVE BEEN
ARRESTED MARCH 6, 1977, AND TO EXPLORE GENERAL TOPIC OF HUMAN
RIGHTS AND POLITICAL PRISONERS IN GHANA. ON ASHONG CASE,
ATTORNEY GENERAL CONFIRMED HE HAD RECEIVED INQUIRY
IN QUESTION AND SAID HE WOULD INVESTIGATE CASE AND
LET AMBASSADOR KNOW ASHONG'S STATUS. AMBASSADOR
REFERRED TO APPARENT CONTRADICTION ON BROADER QUESTION
OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN THIS COUNTRY - AT JANUARY 10
PRESS CONFERENCE, HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG HAD
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REPEATEDLY STATED THERE ARE NO POLITICAL PRISONERS
IN GHANA (ACCRA 0284), BUT BAR ASSOCIATION HAS TAKEN
LEGAL STEPS TO WIN RELEASE OF WHAT IT CLAIMS ARE 451
POLITICAL PRISONERS NOW IN JAIL. ATTORNEY GENERAL
SAID THAT ALMOST ALL OF THESE DETAINEES ARE HARDENED
CRIMINALS WHO ARE BEING LOCKED UP TO PROTECT
SOCIETY. HE SAID HE COULD THINK OF ONLY ONE OR TWO

GENUINE POLITICAL PRISONERS - COL. MINYILA, THE FORMER DIRECTOR OF LOGISTICS ARRESTED FOR COUP PLOTTING IN MAY 1977, AND POSSIBLY ONE CIVILIAN ALSO IMPLICATED IN THIS SCHEME. HE NOTED THAT APPROXIMATELY 200 PRISONERS WILL BE RELEASED SHORTLY; THESE ARE DETAINEES WHO HAVE BEEN HELD FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS AND HAVE HOPEFULLY BEEN REFORMED.

2. JANUARY 13 STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS: AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT WASHINGTON POST REPORTER DAVID OTTAWAY HAD BEEN CAUGHT UP IN DEMONSTRATIONS (SEPTEL) AND WAS DISTURBED BY HARSH POLICE REACTION. ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID THAT THERE WERE SEVERAL REASONS FOR CONSIDERABLE DEGREE OF FORCE POLICE USED ON STUDENTS. FIRST, POLICE KNEW THAT EARLIER SAME DAY STUDENTS IN KUMASI HAD BLOCKED MAIN ROAD, HARRASSED UNION GOVERNMENT SUPPORTERS, AND DAMAGED VEHICLES. SECOND, A POLICEMAN, TAKEN HOSTAGE BY STUDENTS AT LEGON, WAS RUMORED TO HAVE BEEN KILLED. THIS RUMOR TURNED OUT TO BE FALSE, BUT BOTH REPORTS INFLAMED POLICE AND SET THEM ON STUDENTS WITH A WILL. ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID WHOLE INCIDENT WAS "PURELY A POLICE ACTION" AND THAT CAMPUSES ARE NOW QUIET.

3. ACHEAMPONG AND UNION GOVERNMENT: ATTORNEY GENERAL
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SAID HE BELIEVED HEAD OF STATE ACHEAMPONG "WOULD NEVER STAND FOR ELECTION" AS PRESIDENT UNDER A UNION GOVERNMENT BUT WOULD TRY INSTEAD TO HAVE HIMSELF MADE PRESIDENT BY "POPULAR ACCLAMATION." THIS APPROACH WAS "SAFER" FOR ACHEAMPONG THAN TRUSTING TO AN ELECTION, HE INDICATED, BUT EVEN IT MIGHT NOT BE EASY TO PULL OFF. ASKED WHETHER CANDIDATES OTHER THAN ACHEAMPONG MIGHT PUT THEMSELVES FORWARD, ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID WRYLY THAT THIS WAS REGARDED BY MOST GHANAIANS AS "AN UNWISE" COURSE OF ACTION AND THAT NO ONE WAS LIKELY TO STICK HIS NECK OUT THIS FAR. HE MADE NO ATTEMPT TO HIDE HIS OWN VIEW THAT ACHEAMPONG SHOULD STEP DOWN AND CHEERFULLY ADMITTED HE HAD SAID SO TO A BRITISH NEWSPAPER. HE STILL BELIEVED UNION GOVERNMENT WAS THE BEST GOVERNMENTAL SOLUTION FOR GHANA, BUT UNDER "RESPONSIBLE AND ENLIGHTENED" LEADERSHIP.

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4. PEACE AND SOLIDARITY COUNCIL. AMBASSADOR ASKED ABOUT CONCERN EXPRESSED TO HIM BY GHANAIA FRIENDS OVER SOME ACTIONS AND OFFICERS OF COUNCIL. HE ADDED THAT ACCRA REGIONAL CHAIRMAN OF COUNCIL S.O. LAMPTEY, HAD DENIED TO OTTAWAY THAT COUNCIL WAS INVOLVED IN JANUARY 13 CONTINENTAL HOTEL DISTURBANCES (WHERE THUGS WEARING COUNCIL SHIRTS HAD REPORTEDLY INTIMIDATED PATRONS), BUT THAT OTTAWAY DID NOT SEEM TO BELIEVE HIM. ASKED ABOUT REPEAL OF GOG DECREE QUASHING BAR ASSOCIATION'S SUITS AGAINST COUNCIL (ACCRA 0264), ATTORNEY GENERAL SHOWED AMBASSADOR NEW DECREE HE HAD JUST DRAFTED FOR ACHEAMPONG'S APPROVAL, WHICH PROVIDES THAT THESE SUITS CAN NOW GO FORWARD. SOME OF THE ASSOCIATION'S OTHER SUITS, HE COMMENTED, APPEARED TO BE MOTIVATED BY POLITICAL RATHER THAN LEGAL CONCERNS - FOR EXAMPLE, THE ASSOCIATION WAS ARGUING THAT ATTENDANCE OF COUNCIL OFFICERS AT PRO-UNION GOVERNMENT RALLIES VIOLATES GOG'S 1972 LAW AGAINST POLITICAL PARTIES. ATTORNEY GENERAL EXPRESSED HIS PERSONAL OPPOSITION TO COUNCIL AND SAID ITS PROMINENT ROLE WAS DUE TO ITS ADMITTED ORGANIZATIONAL ABILITY AND TO THE INSECURITY OF THE PRESENT CROP OF "MILITARY POLITICIANS."

5. MARCH REFERENDUM: AFTER AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT
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MANY GHANAIA S SEEMED TO HAVE A CYNICAL VIEW OF THE REFERENDUM, BELIEVING IT TO BE ONLY A PLOY DEvised AND MANIPULATED BY THE ACHEAMPONG GOVERNMENT TO STAY ON IN POWER, ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID HE KNEW THESE VIEWS

WERE WIDESPREAD. HOWEVER, HE CONSIDERS ELECTORAL COMMISSIONER JUSTICE ABBAN AN HONEST MAN WHO WOULD NOT HAVE ANY PART OF A RIGGED REFERENDUM. HE INDICATED, ON BALANCE, THAT IN HIS VIEW A DISHONEST REFERENDUM WAS UNLIKELY.

6. ECONOMIC SITUATION: ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID HE AND LIKE-MINDED GOG OFFICIALS ARE EXTREMELY CONCERNED OVER COUNTRY'S ECONOMIC DECLINE, PARTICULARLY TRIPLE DIGIT INFLATION. AMBASSADOR SUGGESTED THAT THERE EXISTS IN THE WEST A RESERVOIR OF GOOD WILL TOWARDS GHANA AND A WILLINGNESS TO ASSIST IF GOG ADOPTED ECONOMIC STABILIZATION MEASURES. ATTORNEY GENERAL SAID HE KNEW THIS WAS THE CASE AND HE HOPED GOG WOULD TAKE ACTION ON ECONOMIC PROBLEMS IN NEAR FUTURE.

7. COMMENT: OUR CONVERSATION WITH KORENTENG-ADDOW, A FORMER HIGH COURT JUSTICE, CONFIRMS OUR IMPRESSION OF HIM AS AN ARTICULATE, ABLE LEADER APPALLED BY PRESENT LEVELS OF OFFICIAL DUPLICITY AND MISMANAGEMENT IN GHANA. HE APPEARS TO BE DOING WHAT HE CAN TO LIMIT DAMAGE BEING INFLICTED BY ACHEAMPONG AND HIS CRONIES. COURAGEOUS AND OUTSPOKEN (HE RECENTLY SUGGESTED PUBLICLY THAT ACHEAMPONG TAKE HIMSELF OUT OF COMPETITION FOR PRESIDENT), HE SEEMS DEDICATED TO KEEPING JUDICIAL SYSTEM AS HONEST AND EFFICIENT AS POSSIBLE. THERE ARE OBVIOUS LIMITS TO HIS INFLUENCE AND HE MAY FIND HIMSELF OUT OF A JOB IF HE PUSHES ACHEAMPONG TOO FAR, BUT AT PRESENT HE IS A MUCH-CONFIDENTIAL

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NEEDED VOICE OF REASON AND MODERATION IN THIS OTHERWISE LACKLUSTER GOVERNMENT.
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